



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

Derbyshire County Council Fostering Service

**Social Care and Health
County Hall
Matlock
Derbyshire
DE4 3AG**

Lead Inspector
Trisha Gibbs

Key Announced Inspection
4th December 2006 09:00

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

- Put the people who use social care first
- Improve services and stamp out bad practice
- Be an expert voice on social care
- Practise what we preach in our own organisation

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This is a report of an inspection to assess whether services are meeting the needs of people who use them. The legal basis for conducting inspections is the Care Standards Act 2000 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for this establishment are those for *Fostering Services*. They can be found at www.dh.gov.uk or obtained from The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Crispins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: www.tso.co.uk/bookshop

Every Child Matters, outlined the government's vision for children's services and formed the basis of the Children Act 2004. It provides a framework for inspection so that children's services should be judged on their contribution to the outcomes considered essential to wellbeing in childhood and later life. Those outcomes are:

- Being healthy
- Staying safe
- Enjoying and achieving
- Making a contribution; and
- Achieving economic wellbeing.

In response, the Commission for Social Care Inspection has re-ordered the national minimum standards for children's services under the five outcomes, for reporting purposes. A further section has been created under 'Management' to cover those issues that will potentially impact on all the outcomes above.

Copies of *Every Child Matters* and *The Children Act 2004* are available from The Stationery Office as above

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SERVICE INFORMATION

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Provider Web address	www.derbyshire.gov.uk
Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)	Derbyshire County Council
Name of registered manager (if applicable)	
Type of registration	Local Auth Fostering Service

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

Date of last inspection 16th-20th January 2006

Brief Description of the Service:

The Fostering Service is part of Derbyshire County Council Children and Younger Adults Service. The service has recently been recently re-structured to provide:

A central Recruitment team, which is responsible for the recruitment of new foster carers. The social workers are co-located with the support teams across the County.

Five local fostering teams based in Ilkeston, Chesterfield, Clay Cross, Swadlincote and Buxton, which support and supervise foster carers.

The Contract Care team, which supports foster carers with additional skills, to care for teenagers with specific needs, who would otherwise be placed in residential or specialist care.

A Disability fostering team which supports foster carers providing short-term breaks and longer-term placements for disabled children. The social workers are co-located with the support teams across the county.

The Fostering Service recruits, assesses, trains and supports foster carers. A total of 349 children and young people were placed with the service at the time of the inspection. The service supports 388 approved foster carers.

SUMMARY

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

Two Inspectors undertook this Announced Inspection over four days, not including the Pre Inspection Meeting.

Inspectors visited three fostering households and looked at four carer files and the files of the children in placement. During the Inspection the Inspectors looked at an additional child's file. In addition to speaking to children and fostering social workers, Inspectors met the team of Service Managers from the five Area Offices and the Recruitment Team as a group. Interviews took place with the Looked After Children's Nurse, the Looked After Children's Education Officer, and the Contracts Officer. The Children's Rights Officer was telephoned. A number of Personnel files were also looked at.

The Fostering Panel was observed and the Chair of the Panel (Quality Assurance Officer) was interviewed with the Lead Officer for the Fostering Service.

The Lead Officer for the Fostering Service completed an Annual Quality Assurance Assessment, data sheets, and Policy and Procedure summaries prior to the Inspection, and information from these documents has contributed to the evidence and judgements within this report.

Forty questionnaires were sent out each to carers, placing social workers and children. Ten were received back from children, eight from placing social workers and twenty-eight from carers. Some comments have been incorporated into this report.

What the service does well:

The Fostering Service is well integrated with other Children's Teams within the Children's Services. Five of Fostering Teams are based locally within Area Support Teams. Good inclusive working relationships were observed during the Inspection.

A strong Quality Assurance section monitors the activity and performance of the Fostering Service. The monitoring function is fully supported through the Fostering Panel process. Three well-constituted Fostering Panels receive Applications and Annual Reviews in addition to other related matters.

Good resources are invested to promote Children's Health and Education. A Looked After Children's Nurse and LACES Teacher is allocated to each Fostering Team. They provide very good training and ongoing advice with regard to Health and Education. In addition to this a CAMHS Consultation service is available to carers and workers.

The Fostering Service has very good Safe Care systems in place. Safe Care policies are meaningful, specific to children placed, and appropriately reviewed.

The Fostering Service provides very good, detailed and clear financial information annually to carers. All carers have access to additional allowances for holidays and to support some children's activities, and access to a Loyalty Bonus at the time of Annual Review.

The Fostering Service supports carers very well and has a very good carer retention strategy in place. There is a stable carer group and carers who leave the service usually leave for retirement reasons. Very positive comments from carers have been included below, and within the report.

The Fostering Service is staffed by a well qualified, experienced, and stable staff group who confirm that they are well supported.

Carers said, 'we consider this service the best in the area. It is our first year and we have found everyone helpful and supportive'. When we had a child with complex needs our supervising social worker made sure we had all the information and medical details we needed before the placement'. 'Our support workers have been excellent'. 'The service works hard to match placements well'. 'I cannot fault the service'. 'We had a grand bowling outing and a picnic in the park'.

Children said 'My carers love me and they respect me for what I am'. 'They always listen to my opinion even if they don't agree with it'. 'I am loved and looked after well'. 'I get warmth, a nice house to live in and a nice warm bed to sleep in'.

What has improved since the last inspection?

The new electronic recording system is becoming established.

The Fostering Service has introduced good procedures and formats to assist with the Matching of children to placement and to identify placement shortfalls.

All foster carers have been provided with a separate record for the recording of Health related information, which will move with the child.

A recently recruited Children's Rights Officer is developing positive initiatives for consulting with, and involving Derbyshire's Looked After Children.

The Carer Handbook has been revised and updated.

Personnel files now contain a full checklist (with reference to the National Minimum Standards) placed at the front of fostering staff files, to ensure that all appointments are fully compliant with Regulations and required checks undertaken.

Foster carers are positively encouraged to attend for I.T training to enable them to make full use of the computer and IT system in their home.

A Kinship Care and Permanence Policy is being developed.

What they could do better:

The profile of Diversity could be raised. The Fostering Service has identified a need for post approval Diversity Training for carers and is purchasing training with a view to extending this.

Fostering Panel membership needs clarification, and a profile for each Panel Member has been suggested to include their individual specialisms and background.

Allegations and Complaints could be better summarized, to include action taken and final outcome.

Please contact the provider for advice of actions taken in response to this inspection.

The report of this inspection is available from enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk or by contacting your local CSCI office. The summary of this inspection report can be made available in other formats on request.

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Being Healthy

The intended outcome for this Standard is:

- The fostering service promotes the health and development of children.(NMS 12)

The Commission considers Standard 12 the key standard to be inspected.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at the outcome for Standard:

12

Quality in this outcome area is **excellent**.

The Fostering Service promotes the health and development of children and young people very well.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

EVIDENCE:

All carers have recently been provided with separate Health records to complete in respect of children placed. Those visited were filling in the Health records appropriately and showed a very good awareness of Health issues. All carers are routinely provided with signed Medical Consent confirmation. In two instances children were in receipt of prescribed medication and carers were recording this on Medication Logs. A specialist Medical Advisor had been involved with the whole family regarding one placement and had worked with the birth children and carers to raise awareness about the medical condition of the young child. This included the use of a video. This is commendable.

All Area Teams are linked with a named Looked After Children Nurse. The LAC Nurse is available for advice on key Health issues, and provides a twice-yearly 'Health and Well being for Looked After Children' training session in each Area, at which time a portfolio of Health Information is provided to each carer. The nurse confirmed that Health information is also discussed at Carer Support Groups. The LAC Nurse also supports Annual Health Assessment processes. Two overdue Health Assessments seen on file had been addressed at the child's LAC review. Post approval training for carers includes a First Aid course.

A Consultation Service facilitated by a Clinical Psychologist CAMHS Social Worker can be accessed by Social Workers, Foster Carers and other Professionals working with LAC, and is provided on a regular basis. Consultations take place in a group or individual setting. Although the Consultation Service does not work directly with children it provides opportunities for workers to discuss the potential mental health needs of young people, sometimes with other key agencies, and to voice concerns and reflect on practice. This service was referred to as a very valuable resource by Social Workers during the Inspection.

Children said 'I eat healthy and take medicine to make me feel better'. 'I love fruit'. 'We go for healthy walks'. 'I love chips but also eat good food'. 'You have to eat healthy so you don't go fat and pop, and you don't get poorly'.

Staying Safe

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- Any persons carrying on or managing the service are suitable. (NMS 3)
- The fostering service provides suitable foster carers.(NMS 6)
- The service matches children to carers appropriately.(NMS 8)
- The fostering service protects each child or young person from abuse and neglect.(NMS 9)
- The people who work in or for the fostering service are suitable to work with children and young people.(NMS 15)
- Fostering panels are organised efficiently and effectively.(NMS 30)

The Commission considers Standards 3, 6, 8, 9, 15 and 30 the key standards to be inspected.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following Standard(s):

3, 6, 8, 9, 15, 30

Quality in this outcome area is **good**.

Very good systems are in place to match children to safe placements and to monitor placements.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

EVIDENCE:

Very good Safe Care plans were seen for all placements tracked and visited. These were specific to children placed, and were reviewed and dated, and where necessary included risk assessments. Fire Escape Plans are routinely drawn up for all fostering households. These were seen on file. Health and Safety checklists are fully completed at time of Approval and reviewed and updated each year. In some files looked at, it appeared that there was only a confirmation sheet rather than full check list presented for Annual Review, and Inspectors suggested that there be a minimum period agreed before another full written checklist is drawn up again. The Fostering Panel makes specific

and rigorous reference to both Safe Care and Health and Safety at Annual Reviews. The uses of Risk Assessment processes are also considered. In one case discussed at the Fostering Panel observed by the Inspector, specialist advice had been sought from the County Council Health and Safety service, since the carers lived on a farm. A representative had visited the carer's home and given advice.

All young people over the age of ten years are subject to CRB checks. One carer CRB was noted to be one year out of date, but this was being urgently followed up and dealt with by the Fostering Service.

Carers visited demonstrated a very good awareness of Safe Care principles, and of Health and Safety principles in relation to the children and young people placed with them. Children were enjoying a very good standard of care. The recently updated Carer's Handbook includes good information for carers about Safe Care, Health and Safety, and Child Protection. The monthly carer newsletter; Foster Focus includes good up to date information about new safety procedures and legislation.

Carers and Social Workers receive good training to help them care for and understand the needs of children who have been subject to abuse. Very good systems are in place through Quality Assurance processes to monitor and respond to the reporting of Child Protection Concerns and Allegations within the Fostering Service. The close working relationships and good communication between Childcare Social Workers, and Supervising Social Workers, ensures that any Child Protection concerns are shared and addressed promptly.

New Matching procedures have recently been implemented, and a good Matching document introduced to evidence consideration of children's individual needs against the placement being proposed. The Matching document includes a section for the identification of placement shortfalls. These had been completed for all cases tracked, although some were more robust than others. Managers are aware that the system now needs to 'bed in' and become routine. There are good solid systems in place for matching children to longer-term placements, including the use of Permanency Panels. Children visited were very well matched to placement.

Personnel files looked at during the Inspection indicated that recommendations from the Inspection undertaken in January this year had been well responded to. The Fostering Service has established a specific link with the Human Resources section, and a full checklist (with reference to the National Minimum Standards) has been placed at the front of fostering staff files to ensure that all appointments are fully compliant. The Service is reminded to clarify with Human Resources how telephone checks will be confirmed on file.

The Fostering Panel observed was well constituted with appropriate Independent and Professional representation. Reviews and applications were considered in an informed and rigorous manner. Education, Health and Safety, Training, and potential Child Protection issues in every case were routinely explored and considered. Two Quality and Assurance Officers, who also provide a strong performance monitoring function, chair the Three Derbyshire Fostering Panels. Inspectors looked at Panel membership lists and Panel procedures and suggested that these could usefully be combined into one complete document, accessible to Panel Members and Social Workers. Panel member's files, while containing evidence of essential CRB checks, contracts and signed confidentiality statements, did not provide a history or overview of that person's professional history or credentials. Inspectors advised that a simple profile for each member could be developed and represented in a leaflet and given to Applicants attending the Fostering Panel. This could explain the Panel process and help to put them at ease.

Enjoying and Achieving

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- The fostering service values diversity.(NMS 7)
- The fostering service promotes educational achievement.(NMS 13)
- When foster care is provided as a short-term break for a child, the arrangements recognise that the parents remain the main carers for the child.(NMS 31)

The Commission considers Standards 7, 13 and 31 the key standards to be inspected.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

7, 13

Quality in this outcome area is **good**.

Children with a disability are provided with very good services. The need for post approval carer Diversity training has been recognised by the service. Very good attention is given to the promotion of children's education. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

EVIDENCE:

All carers visited were receiving a high level of specialist support for the different needs of the children placed with them. Carers looking after children with disabilities were receiving specialist health service appointments and assistance to assess and identify appropriate resources. Carers were very appreciative of the level of support and recognition offered to them by Social Workers. One carer informed the Inspector that when the special Baby Monitor provided for a placement had broken, she had been provided with a replacement within a few hours.

There is a specialist dedicated fostering team that works with Children with a Disability providing respite and other placements. Managers confirmed that there were good examples of carer's property being adapted to meet the specific needs of individual children. Inspectors did not inspect the short break service on this occasion. The Standard was inspected at the last Inspection early this year and was assessed as being fully met.

Currently there are only a small number of children placed within the service who have cultural and ethnic needs, and Inspectors noted the lack of Diversity Training available to carers, although were informed by Managers that training on caring for children of different ethnicity and culture is being commissioned and piloted in one of the Areas next year. This will be built upon with future post approval training. Service Managers confirmed that Equal Opportunities and Diversity were implicit within the six Skills to Foster pre approval training. On Matching forms seen by Inspectors, completed in respect of two children described as Dual Heritage, reference was not made to their potential needs as a result of them being placed with a white family, and how any shortfalls might be addressed. Managers however confirmed that diversity issues would be addressed during the matching process, and shortfalls represented on the matching form. The Fostering Service is advised to consider how to raise the profile of Diversity matters for carers who have been approved, and to consider the inclusion of a robust Diversity section within the Carer's Handbook.

As already noted there is significant input from the CAMHS team for staff and carers, with regard to children's attachment and emotional well being, and this includes the separation from their family background and culture.

Good recording of children's education needs and achievements were seen on files and LAC documentation. Personal Education Planes were in place for all children tracked, and where children were subject to Statement of Education Needs the appropriate documentation and reviews were in place. Carers visited were providing wholehearted support to children in school and encouraging achievement at home. All Fostering households have been provided with computers, and carers are expected to make use of these, attending for training where necessary. A helpline is available to children and carers.

There is a LACES teacher attached to each Area Team who is easily accessible to provide advice, receive referrals and is actively involved in carer training and workshops. The LACES teacher plays an active role in ensuring PEPS are completed and promotes positive partnerships with designated teachers, and with the Corporate Parenting Officer, liaises directly with schools where children are at risk of exclusion. The LACES teacher interviewed demonstrated a strong commitment to supporting and empowering carers to promote learning and achievement. She was regretful that the reorganisation of the service had involved a shift in focus within her role away from direct support to carers, to specific groups of young people. Managers confirmed that young people in year nine and ten, and especially those in Residential and Contract Care, would now be targeted for intensive monitoring and support to ensure they achieve as well as personally possible in their GCSE examinations, but confirmed that carers still had access to advice and support from the LACES team. Pre Inspection documentation stated that five young people went to University this year, and that this takes the number at University to thirteen.

Inspectors were made aware, by carers and staff, of the third annual Big Book Bash event. The event is 'a celebration of the written word' for Looked After Children and included illustration workshops, quizzes, storytelling, magic, free food and books and dressing up as book characters. Over four hundred carers and children attended, and carers told Inspectors what an inspirational event this was, and that children had subsequently taken a more active interest in reading. The event has been recognised nationally and nominated for a major award.

There was good evidence that children are supported to pursue interests and hobbies.

Children said 'I get lots of help at school'. I am attending college at present and I enjoy it'. 'I get help at school and at home'. 'I love reading my books'. 'I go to the Library'.

Making a Positive Contribution

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- The fostering service promotes contact arrangements for the child or young person. (NMS 10)
- The fostering service promotes consultation.(NMS 11)

The Commission considers Standards 10 and 11 the key standards to be inspected.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

10, 11

Quality in this outcome area is **good**.

Contact arrangements are well documented and appropriately managed. Children and young people are well consulted and actively encouraged to participate.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

EVIDENCE:

Contact needs are well reflected in children's documents. Initial referral and Matching forms include the requirement for confirmation of and details about contact arrangements. Good reference is made at LAC reviews and carers visited were understanding and supportive of contact arrangements. One set of carers had worked very well with families to achieve children's return to their parents. Contact was appropriately managed in the four cases tracked. In each Area Team there is a Community Care worker who is available to support contact meetings.

The recently appointed Children's Rights Officer is now attending all carer Support Groups to raise awareness of her role, to promote advocacy services and to build up positive links with carers. Care leavers edit a quarterly newsletter for young people, named 'Your News'. The Children's Rights Officer has introduced a text consultation system for children, in line with that suggested by the national Children's Rights Director and hopes to re launch Total Respect 2 training for carers which provides opportunities for children and young people to influence carer's thinking and perceptions. Inspectors were informed about a number of developments planned for the next year including the integration of Derbyshire's Looked After Children to into the Derbyshire Youth Forum.

Children and carer's own children were noted to be well consulted by the Fostering Service and through LAC systems. Children and young people visited were observed to be included in discussions about day-to-day matters with their carers.

Children said 'When I need someone I just talk to my foster mum'. 'I have a huge variety of people to talk to, carers, social workers and friends'. 'My carers ask me if I am happy with everything'. 'I love going bowling with my carers and everyone and we have fun'. 'The fostering worker comes to talk to us before the review about what we think about mum and dad fostering. It's good'.

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- The fostering service prepares young people for adulthood.(NMS 14)
- The fostering service pays carers an allowance and agreed expenses as specified.(NMS 29)

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

14. 29

Quality in this outcome area is **good**.

Young people are encouraged to learn independence skills.

Children's placements are well resourced and carers are provided with very good financial information.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

EVIDENCE:

Good information is provided within the updated Carer's Handbook about young people leaving care, including the options that might be open to them in terms of the Supported Lodging Scheme or Higher Education Scheme. Carers are encouraged to support young people to take part time jobs to earn extra pocket money, when they are an appropriate age.

One young person who was visited during the Inspection is just sixteen, and a full Pathway Plan was being completed with her. Because she has a disability she will still require significant support within her foster home, however it was clear that her carers were working with her to promote her skills to manage everyday household tasks. The young person told the Inspector that she picked the colours for her recently decorated bedroom and had helped to paint the room.

All carers spoken to and visited reported that they are paid through reliable systems, and that the Fostering Service was very supportive and prompt in the provision of equipment. 'You only have to ask' said one carer. Another carer noted that the Fostering Service had been very proactive to ensure that damage incurred by children in placement did not impact on their own household insurance. The Carer Handbook contains good guidelines about Finances including insurance, tax liabilities, benefit entitlements, and claimable additional allowances. Carers have been well consulted about National Minimum Allowances, and their contributions forwarded to DFES. From April 2007 Allowances will be in line with National Minimum rates. Bonus payments are available for all carers at the time of their Annual Review, contingent on their participation in agreed prioritised training or other criteria.

An excellent booklet is provided to carers on an annual basis, which provides clarity and guidance regarding all fostering payments and allowances. This commendable document clarifies queries raised by carers, including the nature of respite support available, impact of children's absences from the foster home, support for care leavers, day fostering rates and NVQ training.

Management

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- There is a clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and the fostering service ensures that they meet those aims and objectives.(NMS 1)
- The fostering service is managed by those with the appropriate skills and experience. (NMS 2)
- The fostering service is monitored and controlled as specified. (NMS 4)
- The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.(NMS 5)
- Staff are organised and managed effectively.(NMS 16)
- The fostering service has an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff.(NMS 17)
- The fostering service is a fair and competent employer.(NMS 18)
- There is a good quality training programme. (NMS 19)
- All staff are properly accountable and supported.(NMS 20)
- The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.(NMS 21)
- Foster carers are provided with supervision and support.(NMS 22)
- Foster carers are appropriately trained.(NMS 23)
- Case records for children are comprehensive.(NMS 24)
- The administrative records are maintained as required.(NMS 25)
- The premises used as offices by the fostering service are suitable for the purpose.(NMS 26)
- The fostering service is financially viable. (NMS 27)
- The fostering service has robust financial processes. (NMS 28)
- Local Authority fostering services recognise the contribution made by family and friends as carers.(NMS 32)

The Commission considers Standards 1, 16, 17, 21, 24, 25 and 32 the key standards to be inspected.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

1, 16, 17, 21, 24, 25, 32

Quality in this outcome area is **good**.

The Fostering Service is subject to very good monitoring processes. The integrated provision of a local service impacts positively on placements, however lines of accountability could be clearer.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

EVIDENCE:

The Fostering Service Statement of Purpose provides good information about the structure of the service and location of the Area Teams. A Booklet is available for young children about being fostered and a Guide for older children is about to be launched.

The activity of the Fostering Service is overseen and monitored by a strong Quality Assurance Section that is involved in the receipt of information about allegations, concerns, and notifiable incidents. Fostering Service Managers and Social Workers refer to the Quality Assurance Managers, who also chair the Fostering Panels, for guidance on these matters. Good Quality Assurance systems are in place. Fostering Service Managers are however directly line managed by the Area Managers of the local Children's Services Area Teams with whom they are based. The Lead Fostering Manager, (Project and Planning) performance manages the whole service; line manages the Central Recruitment Team and chairs the monthly Fostering Manager's Meetings.

Inspectors noted that the area working arrangement had undoubted positive outcomes for children, and acknowledged the importance of a robust independent monitoring functions within the service, however were concerned that there was still some lack of clarity about the various Managers and Officers delegated responsibilities and decision-making powers. The Fostering Service is advised to better clarify these in the Fostering Procedures.

There is a good stable staff team throughout the Fostering Service and staff reported that they had access to good training opportunities and regular supervision. Although a formal Appraisal system is not in place staff confirmed that they completed Personal Development Plans with their Managers. Positive working relationships between fostering and children's social workers were observed during the Inspection. Good designated clerical support is integral to each Fostering Team, and Inspectors observed that the administrative was role very much valued during the Inspection.

As with other Local Authorities, Derbyshire has experienced difficulty in recruiting new carers to replace those leaving (usually retiring from) the service. Very good retention schemes are in place to retain carers, and recruitment initiatives are ongoing. The detailed Fostering Service recruitment strategy works to a target of recruiting up to seventy more carers each year, however Managers confirmed that they were currently falling short of these targets. Recruitment approaches to attract carers to the Contract and Disability Fostering Service are being reviewed. One well-publicised recruitment evening was held the week prior to the Inspection at a local leisure centre. Seven out of eight Social Workers in questionnaires noted a lack of choice with regard to placements, however Inspectors observed that care was taken to keep exemption applications to a minimum. Only four exemptions had been agreed over the last year.

A dedicated Contracts Officer commissions Independent Fostering Agency placements, and there are good systems in place to manage and monitor these. At the time of the Inspection forty-five IFA placements were being commissioned.

One of the carers tracked and visited during the Inspection was a Kinship care arrangement. The carers were the grandparents of a child with significant needs. The carers were extremely positive about the level of support offered to them by their Supervising Social Worker and the child's Social Worker. They had been provided with appropriate aides and adaptations, and were working closely with school and health professionals. They were providing a very good standard of care for the child, and confirmed that they had access to the same support systems as other carers. The child was happily playing on a computer during the visit and the carer confirmed the Fostering Service had provided this. Kinship carers are eligible to access the annual loyalty bonus. A Kinship Care and Permanence Policy is being developed within Children and Younger Adults Department.

Form F Assessments and Carer Annual Reviews were looked at during the Inspection. Both are monitored well by the Fostering Panel. The use of competency-based assessments is currently being introduced.

There is a very good retention strategy in place to retain and support carers. This includes Annual Bonus payments, clear payment structures, monthly newsletters and regular supervision visits. Out of hours support is very good and Supervising Social Workers liaise closely with the Children's Rapid Response Team, to ensure essential information is communicated to the team prior to weekends. A new Training and Development programme has been compiled, and carers are being provided with a training portfolio to complete, with the support of their Supervising Social Worker, to evidence learning outcomes. Carers also attend local support groups that include training activities. A Mentors scheme is also in place whereby experienced carers are

linked to newly approved carers for six months following approval. Inspectors were impressed that fifty-seven carers had achieved NVQ level 3 and twenty are currently working toward the award.

Carers spoke very positively, through questionnaires and interviews, about the support from their Supervising Social Workers and the children's Social Workers. Comments from the many received included, 'I am well supported. I feel I have made a difference to children's lives'. My support worker is excellent. I have access to training, transport for holidays and a holiday allowance'. 'I have always had lots of support'. 'We get one hundred percent support from our worker'. 'Everyone in the team is approachable. I am treated as one of the team'.

Derbyshire County Council has, over the last eighteen months, implemented a fully electronic recording system for children and carer files called Framework I. This is still at an early stage being established, however the positive impact of the system was evident to Inspectors, whereby important case information, once entered is immediately available to all Social Workers and Managers involved in the case. The development of the system is ongoing and support mechanisms in place to advise and guide the staff team. Inspectors noted the commitment of staff to work through initially, a more challenging and time consuming recording process. Many said they found the system 'hard work' and commented on unnecessary duplication of work in some instances. Most concerning was the need to maintain a separate record for each individual foster carer. Carers who are approved as a couple provide placements as a partnership; therefore maintaining separate records appears to be simply increasing staff workload inappropriately.

The record of complaints and allegations and concerns were looked at during the Inspection. These are well monitored through electronic systems, and clear reporting procedures are in place, however there now needs to be a format developed for the summarising of these, to include action taken and final outcome.

Carer records seen during visits were good, and appropriately maintained. Supervising Social Workers see and monitor these. Carers were aware of the need for records to be locked away.

SCORING OF OUTCOMES

This page summarises the assessment of the extent to which the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services have been met and uses the following scale.

4 Standard Exceeded (Commendable) **3** Standard Met (No Shortfalls)
2 Standard Almost Met (Minor Shortfalls) **1** Standard Not Met (Major Shortfalls)

"X" in the standard met box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion
 "N/A" in the standard met box denotes standard not applicable

BEING HEALTHY	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
12	4

STAYING SAFE	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
3	3
6	3
8	3
9	4
15	3
30	3

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
7	3
13	4
31	X

MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
10	3
11	3

ACHIEVING ECONOMIC WELLBEING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
14	3
29	4

MANAGEMENT	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
1	3
2	X
4	4
5	X
16	3
17	3
18	X
19	X
20	X
21	4
22	X
23	X
24	3
25	3
26	X
27	X
28	X
32	3

No

Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection?

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider(s) must comply with the given timescales.

No.	Standard	Regulation	Requirement	Timescale for action

RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations relate to National Minimum Standards and are seen as good practice for the Registered Provider/s to consider carrying out.

No.	Refer to Standard	Good Practice Recommendations

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